

Message Text

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DOD/ISA - MR. MOUNTAIN

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 216220

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CVIS, BTRA, UR

SUBJECT: VISA PROCEDURES FOR SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS

REFS: (A) MOSCOW 13580; (B) MOSCOW 13870; (C) STATE 178220

1. SUMMARY. DEPARTMENT APPRECIATES EMBASSY CONCERNS ABOUT IMPLEMENTATION NEW VISA PROCEDURES FOR COMMERCIAL VISITORS AND WELCOMES ITS SUGGESTIONS FOR THEIR MODIFICATION. EMBASSY SHOULD BE AWARE, HOWEVER, THAT THESE INTER-AGENCY DEVELOPED PROCEDURES WERE DESIGNED NOT ONLY TO ENABLE THE DEPARTMENT AND OTHER INTERESTED AGENCIES TO MONITOR MORE EFFECTIVELY THE INCREASING FLOW OF SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS BUT TO FACILITATE THE PROCESSING OF SUCH VISITS. PROCEDURES WORKING WELL HERE AND HAVE FACILITATED MEETING DEPARTMENT'S NEW INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND COORDINATION

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RESPONSIBILITIES DESCRIBED IN MATERIALS POUCHED TO

EMBASSY. IMPLEMENTATION BY EMBASSY OF NEW PROCEDURES AS THEY APPLY TO SOVIETS IN MOSCOW AND AS REVISED BELOW IN RESPONSE TO EMBASSY COMMENTS REFTELS, WILL CONSIDERABLY ENHANCE OUR ABILITY TO DEAL WITH UNPRECEDENTED INCREASE IN SOVIET COMMERCIAL TRAVEL TO US. END SUMMARY.

2. INsofar AS THE REVISED PROCEDURES DIRECTLY AFFECT EMBASSY AND SOVIETS IN MOSCOW, THEY INVOLVE THREE CHANGES FROM PREVIOUS PRACTICE.

(A) ADOPTION OF THE "COMVIS" DESIGNATOR IS DESIGNED TO IDENTIFY AND FACILITATE THE ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION OF COMMERCIAL VISA CABLES TO INTERESTED USG AGENCIES, THEREBY LESSENING THE NEED FOR TIME-CONSUMING TELEPHONIC AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT AND OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE USG. "COMVIS" IS ALSO INTENDED TO REDUCE THE TIME REQUIRED FOR SECURITY NAMECHECKS. THE FBI AND THE CIA HAVE AGREED TO INITIATE AND REPORT THE RESULTS OF NAMECHECKS UPON RECEIPT OF THE "COMVIS" VISA APPLICATION CABLE RATHER THAN BEGIN THE PROCEDURE FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF TYPED REQUEST FROM VISA OFFICE. "COMVIS" WAS ADOPTED AS AN ACRONYM FOR THE STANDARD DESCRIPTIVE PHASE "COMMERCIAL VISITORS" AND IS INTENDED BOTH TO SERVE THE ABOVE PURPOSES AND TO MEET CERTAIN REVISED INS PROCEDURES WITH RESPECT TO COMMERCIAL VISA EXTENSIONS. IF, HOWEVER, IN EMBASSY'S VIEW THIS DESIGNATION IS SUBJECT TO ERRONEOUS INTERPRETATION BY SOVIETS, DEPARTMENT PREPARED TO ACCEPT EMBASSY SUGGESTION OF "BUSVIS". PLEASE CONFIRM TO DEPARTMENT BEFORE INITIATING CHANGE OF DESIGNATOR.

(B) THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUESTED OF VISA APPLICANTS BY THE NEW PROCEDURES IS SIMILARLY DESIGNED TO EXPEDITE THE PROCESSING OF THESE APPLICATIONS. INTER-AGENCY AGREEMENT REQUIRES THAT THE DEPARTMENT AUTHORIZE VISAS NO EARLIER THAN 3-5 WORKING DAYS AFTER RECEIPT IN SOV OF FINAL ITINERARY. SCANT INFORMATION ON ITINERARY HITHERTO PROVIDED IN VISA APPLICATIONS (EVEN WHEN FULLER ITINERARY OFTEN WELL KNOWN TO PROSPECTIVE

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VISITOR ON BASIS CORRESPONDENCE WITH US FIRMS) HAS OBLIGED LIMITED STAFF IN SOV TO PIECE TOGETHER MORE COMPLETE ITINERARY THROUGH TIME-CONSUMING COMMUNICATIONS WITH LISTED OR PRESUMED US HOST COMPANIES AND RESIDENT SOVIET COMMERCIAL ORGANIZATIONS. THIS PRACTICE HAS CONTRIBUTED TO DELAY IN CLEARANCE PROCESS AND FINAL VISA AUTHORIZATION. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REQUIRED BY DEPARTMENT IN VISA APPLICATION NOTE RELATES PRIMARILY TO

DATA SPECIFIED IN PARA 5 REF C.

DEPARTMENT WELL AWARE OF NEED FOR FLEXIBILITY ON THIS ISSUE AND THAT OFTEN FINAL ITINERARY CANNOT BE DEVELOPED UNTIL AFTER COMMERCIAL VISITOR HAS ARRIVED IN US. HOWEVER, DEPARTMENT WILL NOT IMMEDIATELY AUTHORIZE VISAS IN CASES WHEN ITINERARY INFORMATION ON VISA APPLICATION BEARS LITTLE OR NO RELATIONSHIP TO REQUESTED LENGTH OF STAY IN US AND AFTER CONTACT BY DEPARTMENT WITH THE

LISTED HOST COMPANIES REVEALS THAT THEY ARE PREPARED TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ONLY FRACTION OF PROJECTED VISIT. EMBASSY WILL NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT IN CASE OF PERMANENT STAFFS, EXPO 74 STAFF, AND INSPECTORS OR TRAINEES WHO WILL BE PRESENT IN US FOR EXTENDED PERIODS, NO COMPLETE ADVANCE ITINERARY IS REQUIRED. WITH RESPECT TO SHORTER-TERM COMMERCIAL VISITORS, DEPARTMENT WILL INTERPRET VISA INFORMATION AS COMPLETE STATEMENT OF APPLICANT'S INTENTIONS, TO BE CONFIRMED AND SUPPLEMENTED AS NECESSARY BY US COMPANIES AND RESIDENT SOVIET COMMERCIAL ORGANIZATIONS. ANY SUBSEQUENT CHANGES IN SUCH ITINERARIES WILL CONTINUE TO BE FACILITATED PROVIDED THEY CAN BE REASONABLY RELATED TO ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF VISIT.

(C) REQUIREMENT THAT MFA SUBMIT REQUEST FOR CLOSED AREA EXCEPTION DOES NOT, AS EMBASSY INFERS, SUGGEST A MORE RESTRICTIVE DEPARTMENT POLICY ON GRANTING SUCH EXCEPTIONS. REVISED PROCEDURE IS INTENDED TO CLOSE ANOMALOUS GAP IN PRESENT PRACTICE WHEREBY SOVIET EMBASSY, AMTORG, KAMA COMMISSION, TRADE AND ECONOMIC COUNCIL, ETC., REGULARLY SUBMIT SUCH REQUESTS FOR SOVIET COMMERCIAL VISITORS ALREADY IN US BUT NO REQUESTS ARE MADE ON BEHALF OF

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VISITORS TRAVELLING FROM USSR TO CLOSED AREAS. DRAMATIC RISE IN VOLUME OF SOVIET COMMERCIAL TRAVEL TO US HAS INCREASINGLY INVOLVED VISITS TO AREAS CLOSED FOR SECURITY REASONS THUS COMPLICATING CLEARANCE PROCESS AND DELAYING VISA AUTHORIZATIONS.

IN VIEW EMBASSY CONCERNS ON THIS MATTER, DEPARTMENT IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT EMBASSY SUGGESTION THAT MFA INCLUDE SENTENCE IN VISA APPLICATION NOTE REQUESTING EXCEPTION "TO ANY RELEVANT CLOSED AREA RESTRICTION." STATE WILL IDENTIFY AND GRANT APPROVAL OF CLOSED AREA REQUEST WHEN AUTHORIZING VISA. EMBASSY MAY ORALLY INFORM MFA OF ABOVE CLARIFICATION OF CLOSED AREA EXCEPTION PROCEDURE.

IN THIS CONNECTION, VISITORS UNDER ARTICLE IV OF 1972

S&T AGREEMENT HAVE BEEN INCLUDED IN CATEGORY FOR WHOM
CLOSED AREA EXCEPTIONS ARE REQUIRED BECAUSE IN VAST
MAJORITY OF CASES THEY HAVE BEEN INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM
OTHER COMMERCIAL VISITORS. FURTHERMORE, DEPARTMENT'S
1962 EXEMPTION FROM TRAVEL CONTROLS OF EXCHANGE VISITORS
WAS UNILATERAL CONCESSION NEVER RECIPROCATED BY SOVIETS.
HOWEVER, IF MFA RAISES THIS POINT, DEPARTMENT PREPARED
TO WAIVE PARTICULAR EXCEPTION REQUESTS FOR SUCH VISITORS
PROVIDED THEY ARE ONLY VISITING FIRMS WITH WHOM SUCH
AGREEMENTS ARE IN FORCE AND PROVIDED THAT THE AGREEMENTS

CONSTITUTE SUBJECT MATTER OF VISIT.

3. IN SUM, THE NEW PROCEDURES ARE DESIGNED TO (1)
ENABLE THE DEPARTMENT TO MEET ITS NEW OBLIGATIONS MORE
EFFECTIVELY TO COORDINATE AND MONITOR THE FLOW OF SOVIET
COMMERCIAL VISITORS TO THE US, (2) FACILITATE THE PRO-
CESSING OF AN INCREASING NUMBER OF VISA REQUESTS AND THE
CLEARANCE OF SOVIET COMMERCIAL TRAVEL WITHIN THE US,
AND (3) ADAPT RECIPROCAL US CONTROLS TO REFLECT THE
CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES OF SOVIET COMMERCIAL TRAVEL WHICH
HAS INCREASINGLY INVOLVED VISITS TO US SECURITY CLOSED
AREAS. IMPLEMENTATION BY EMBASSY OF NEW PROCEDURES AS
MODIFIED ABOVE WILL ENHANCE CONSIDERABLY DEPARTMENT'S
ABILITY TO DEAL WITH UNPRECEDENTED INCREASE IN SOVIET
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